



Houston

Center of Excellence

Director: Laura A. Petersen, MD, MPH

Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2008

The Theme of the Center is "From Encounter to Policy: An Integrated Approach to Improving Quality of Care for Veterans." The theme capitalizes on our unique capabilities in the areas of patient-doctor communication, service delivery, outcomes assessment, and health policy, with a recent addition of genomics. The Houston Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) Center of Excellence (CoE) utilizes available resources to: 1) support, mentor and develop outstanding research leaders, and 2) produce excellent science that impacts policy, practice, and patients in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system.

The Houston CoE was founded in 1990 and successfully renewed thereafter. The CoE is organized into four scientific programs:

1. Health Decision-Making and Communication – Led by Program Chief Richard Street, PhD. Program members study the decisional and communication processes used by patients and providers as they interact, with the goal of using this knowledge to enhance patients' participation in the care process, maximize patients' ability to manage their chronic health problems, and ensure care for veterans is in line with patients' and families' values and preferences.
2. Health Services Delivery and Organization – Led by Center Co-Principal Investigator (PI) Director Mark Kunik, MD, MPH. Members of the program study innovative interventions and modes of care delivery with the goal to actively disseminate and implement research findings into health care for veterans.
3. Health Policy and Quality – Led by Center PI, Laura Petersen, MD, MPH. Program members study effects of local, state, and federal governmental policies on the health of populations, access to care, and the efficiency and quality of care, with the goal of influencing health policy and improving the quality of health care for veterans.
4. Clinical Epidemiology and Outcomes – Led by Program Chief Hashem El-Serag, MD, MPH. Program members study the distribution and determinants of health-related states, events, and outcomes in specific populations, with the goal of controlling health problems in veterans.

Each program seeks to provide outstanding leadership and scholarship to produce the best science in its area while collaborating effectively with other scientific programs. The following provide support for these programs: Design and Analysis Program for methods and programming (led by David Latini, PhD), and the Operations group for finance and administrative functions (led by Cynthia Nelson). Laura Petersen, MD, MPH, was named as the CoE PI in May 2007, following a national search. (She served as the Acting Principal Investigator at the time of the Center renewal application.) This first year under new leadership brought a return of stability and growth following two years of multiple changes in leadership. Core investigators have increased as well as the total number of staff. In addition, several investigators were promoted this year from Associate Professor to Professor. The CoE contiguous space continues to be a source of pride and helps with Center productivity, cohesiveness, and recruitment. The Center occupies 35,000 square feet in the Nabisco building at 2450 Holcombe in the Texas Medical Center (TMC), near the footprint campus of the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC). The MEDVAMC is a member institute of the TMC and a primary health care provider for more than 120,000 veterans, including over 3,000 OEF/OIF veterans.